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(Date)

TO: Mr. James Reber

BUILDING M | ROOM NO. 1128

REMARKS:

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FROM: [redacted] OCI

BUILDING [redacted] | EXTENSION

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The notion that the collection of information can proceed in advance of and separately from the process of analysis is part of the anti-rationalism that characterizes a great deal of modern thinking. It is part and parcel of the view -- currently held and expressed by many -- that the essential feature of scientific method is to distrust all reason and to place reliance on facts only. The slogan is: "Don't think, find out." The scientific method -- according to this view -- is a process having three stages 1) collect facts; 2) classify the facts; 3) let the facts suggest a working hypothesis to explain themselves.

The difficulty with this process -- in either intelligence research or science -- is that it presents an unanswerable question at the outset. Collect the facts. But what facts? Obviously there is no need to collect facts that do not bear on the inquiry. Attention to irrelevant material, not only is without use, it distracts from the inquiry.

It is clear that there can be no search for facts in science -- or in intelligence -- until we know what we already know and have formulated some ideas about the relations of what we are seeking to what we already know. Without such formulations, there is nothing to look for.

Begin with the facts. This is easy to say. But there are difficulties that are fundamental. What are the facts? It is determination of the facts that is the object of investigation. If that were the beginning of the process, the other stages would be unnecessary.

To anyone who has reflected on the scientific method, it is commonplace that the determination of the facts is a long, difficult and baffling process. This is so because a) facts are not easily accessible and b) what we take for fact is often full of illusion. The problem is one of purifying the facts and giving them a place in a logical analysis of things we know.

Science -- adequate intelligence research, adequate intelligence (to use a much abused word) -- is not just organized and classified facts. The facts in a telephone directory or railroad timetable are organized and classified and useful for certain purposes but are not a scientific treatment of a subject.

All scientific investigation begins with a question or problem. When we find that the actual body of knowledge we possess either doesn't give us an answer or gives diverse answers, we begin an inquiry -- not a random hit and miss inquiry aimed at collecting any and all facts -- but an inquiry aimed at securing the relevant facts, the facts that fill in the gaps in our knowledge These gaps can only be determined by an analytical examination of the problem by the expert in the field who knows what we already know and has formulated some general ideas of the relation of what we know to what we do not know. The use of reason of analytical judgement enriches us with a number of hypotheses that make possible a richer variety of observation.

As Darwin pointed out, long ago, the most active observers are the best theorizers and contributions to knowledge are not made by those who go about collecting information innocent of any preconceptions. Knowledge does not come from gaping at the world with an empty head. The contributions to a field are made by those who have acquired the most knowledge and fruitful ideas on the subject of inquiry and collection of facts unrelated to the needs of such people is a waste of time and energy that not only does not give the analyst what he needs but does give him much that positively distracts him from real accomplishment.